A SERMON OF Simony & Sacriledge.

'Tis not to be forgotten, tho' it be forgotten, that whoever gave any Lands or Endowments to the Service of God, gave it in a formal Writing as now adays betwixt Man and Man, Sealed and Witneſſed; and the tender of the Gift was *Super Altare* by the Donor on his Knees, *Deo & Eccleſiæ.*

Bp. Andrew's *Notes upon the* Liturgy.

By *EDWARD MARSTON*, an unworthy Prieſt of the *Church of England*, ſometime of *Whitby* in *York-ſhire.*

Ne diutina injuſtitiæ impunitas amplius inoleſceret, accingam me viriliter, & ſtabo pro Caſtris Eccleſiæ, Clamare non ceſſabo; quaſi Tuba exaltabo vocem meam, annunciabo populo ſcelera eorum, & raptoribus Eccleſiaſticarum Poſſeſſionum peccata eorum.

Sanctus Theodardus Epiſcopus Trajectenſis & Martyr, *&c.*

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PROVERBS, XX. Verſe xxv.

It is a ſnare to the man who devoureth that which is holy: and after vows to make enquiry.

MY Author telleth me in the Twentyfifth Chapter of this Book and the Eleventh Verſe, That—*A word fitly ſpoken is like apples of gold in pictures of ſilver:* That is, as the outſide is Beautiful, ſo the inſide is far more precious, as Gold excelleth Silver. So are the words of Wiſdom every where glorious, yet being fitted with Time and Seaſon, they have an inward and ſecret Operation, far more forceable and effectual, than otherwiſe they would: *They be apples of gold* with *pictures of ſilver.* Now as theſe Silver Pictures, I mean, the Ornaments of Speech are not to be neglected, ſo the Golden Subſtance which by a ſecret Opperation is directed to the Heart and Conſcience, is every where to be preferr'd. Wherefore when I gave all diligence to ſpeak unto you; not only things profitable for Chriſtians, but ſeaſonable for the Times we live in, I was directed to this Choice, concerning the Profanation of things Hallow'd, and the dangers thereupon enſuing.——Towards the unfolding whereof I am depriv'd of that uſual help which other Scriptures do afford: Namely, that current of Speech and ſequel of Argument, whereby one Sentence doth follow upon another in ſo good Conſequence, that the occaſion and premiſes of the place, do ſerve for a Key to open our Text: But theſe Proverbs be certain Drops of Divine Wiſdom (or Golden Apples you may call

them) each making an entire Globe or Ball within it ſelf, whereof this is one. — We may divide it in the midſt.

Firſt, The one half compaſſeth him in the Snare of Deſtruction who ſpoileth God of his Right in Hallowed things:

The *Second* Catcheth him who ſeeketh occaſion to unwind himſelf out of thoſe Vows which are ſolemnly made before unto God; wherein the more he ſtruggleth, the faſter he tieth himſelf: For the firſt word is indifferently apply'd unto both parts, and ſo make a double ſnare. *Laqueus eſt devorare ſacrum: Laqueus eſt poſt vota inquirere.*

This kind of ſanctify'd things intended by *Solomon* is by conſent of all Expoſitors taken to be an inferior Degree, whereunto we may deſcend by theſe few ſteps.

1. That Sacred Majeſty of God, which is Holineſs it ſelf in the Abſtract, is then prophan'd by Man (as much as in him lieth) and injur'd in the higheſt degree, when 'tis Blaſphem'd. This is Deſtruction in it ſelf with God, who raineth Snairs upon ſuch for their Portion, and their Arrows ſhot againſt Heaven fall back upon their own pates.

And it were to be wiſhed, that this was alſo a ſnare of Deſtruction amongſt Men. For Nature hath ſo preſcribed, and graven it in the Hearts of Men from the Beginning, that Blaſphemy is puniſhable by Death. That Curſed Speech of *Job*'s Wife; *Curſe God and dye* (*Job* 2. 9.) was grounded upon a common receiv'd Maxim in that time of Nature, that a Blaſphemer muſt not live. And that Heatheniſh King *Nebuchadnezzar*, had no ſooner acknowledg'd the Love of God, but made a Decree, that, whoſoever Blaſphemed ſhould die a violent Death.

But admit there be no ſuch Law eſtabliſht, and that upon

upon this Charitable ſuppoſition, that a Chriſtian Kingdom, will breed no ſuch Monſters: Shall this be imputed for a Want? Not until thoſe Monſters appear: For in the Commonwealth of *Iſrael* there was no poſitive Law againſt Blaſphemy, until ſuch time as a Blaſphemer was diſcover'd (*Levit.* 24. 14.) and then upon that occaſion the Law was made. So if this wicked Age wherein we live ſhall bring forth ſuch Miſcreants, and execrable Wretches as ſhall dare to breath direct Blaſphemy againſt the God of Heaven to the utter dividing, and deing of him, then I take it to be a thing not unworthy the higheſt Conſultation, whether that Judicial Law of God be a Pattern for us in this Kind. For if we add to the Law of God concerning Theft, for the better preſervation of the Publick Peace; let us not diminiſh the Law of the ſame God for the preſervation of that Sacred Name, whereupon the Publick Good both of Church and State doth immediately depend. If the Civil Magiſtrate doth carry a Sword, and not in vain, not a Rod for Correction only, but a Sword to puniſh with Death; then let not that Sin, which by the general conſent of all Divines is of all Sins abſolutely the greateſt, eſcape the edge of the Sword. Thus much is inferr'd upon neceſſary implication, That 'tis deſtruction in the higheſt degree to Prophane Holineſs it ſelf. Yet this is not intended by the direct meaning of this Text.

2. As God is Holineſs in himſelf, ſo hath it pleas'd him to Communicate the ſame to his Church, to make her not only a Catholick, but an Holy Church. To this end hath he Sanctify'd ſpecial Means, that is, ſeparated them, or ſet them apart from common uſe to effect Holineſs in the Hearts of the People, whereof there be Three Degrees.

Firſt, The Word and Prayer, together with the Adminiſtration of the Sacraments have the firſt place; wherefore

fore the Arch-Miniſters of the Goſpel, the Twelve Apoſtles, leaving all other Buſineſs gave themſelves to Prayer, and the Adminiſtration of the Word (*Act.* 6.4.) To devour theſe is apparent Deſtruction: For where theſe be wanting the People muſt needs periſh (*Prov.* 29.8.) Yet ſuch is the Malice, and ſubtilty of the Serpent, that rather than this ſhall ſtand entire, he will ſo work that one ſhall devour another. The time was when Prayer being turn'd into a Maſs, and the Maſs into an Idol, did ſwallow up the Preaching of the Word: The time is that Preaching hath well-nigh ſwallow'd up Prayer, as if there was nothing Holy in the Church but a Sermon. Such is the Peeviſhneſs of our Corrupt Nature, that where God hath combined ſuch a lovely pair of Vertues together, we cannot lean to the one; but we muſt deſpiſe the other. Whereas indeed there is ſuch a ſweet Concord and Harmony between them, that whoſo deſpiſeth the one, ſhall be depriv'd of the Comfort of the other. They be the Aſcending and Deſcending Angels of Commerce between God and us. The Word teacheth us to know his Truth. Prayer teſtifieth that we acknowledge his Goodneſs to be the only Fountain of all Bleſſings. Preaching bringeth Knowledge, without which Devotion is Blind; Prayer exerciſeth Devotion, without which Knowledge is Lame and Unprofitable: The own ſoweth the Seed, the other fetcheth a ſhower of Graces from Heaven to make it grow: By Preaching God doth ſerve us with that Heavenly Manna, the Food of our Souls; by Prayer we do ſerve God, which is the End of all our Preaching. Be it far from us then to make a Divorce between theſe two, which can ſo well agree.

Secondly, That theſe Sacred means might take effect in working Holineſs in the Church of God he hath Sanctify'd and ſet apart in the ſecond Rank, Time, Place, and Perſon for the Miniſtry of the Word, Prayer, and Sacra-

Sacraments. For Time he hath ſelected the Lord's Day, for Place the Temple, for Perſons the Clergy.

1. The Lord's Day Sanctify'd, or ſet apart from common uſe to God's Service, is then devour'd, when it is Prophan'd by weekly Buſineſs, or lewd Sports. The Ends why the Lord's Day was Ordain'd are theſe. 1. For the Exerciſe of all Duties of Piety, in Publick eſpecially. 2. For the Practice of all Duties of Charity and Piety. 3. To remember the great Works of God, eſpecially of the Creation and Redemptiou of the World. And if in every Week, or Month, or Year, we ſhould ſet ſome time apart to Commemorate God's Mercy in all his other Acts of Gracious Providence belonging to our Preſervation, it would be no Superſtition, but an Act of Piety in any ſingle Chriſtian, or (if Authority ſhould think good) in any Publick Society of them. So likewiſe the Birth, Paſſion, Aſcenſion of Chriſt, the Deſcent of the Spirit, the Birth or Martyrdom of the Apoſtles, and Saints of Scripture, and any remarkable temporal Deliverance, or (by proportion) alſo any matter of Humiliation, any Sin or Judgment on a Kingdom, will by the example of God himſelf, (both in this Fourth Commandment, and in other Feaſts and Faſts of the Church preſcribed by him) be reſolv'd to be fit Seaſons and Opportunities to Conſecrate ſome conſiderable part of our time to God.

2. The Holineſs of the Place is devoured, when the Temple of God is made an Exchange (*John* 2. 16.) I mean not only the Temple at *Hieruſalem*, but every place Conſecrated to God's Worſhip is Holy, and therefore (ſaith the Apoſtle) not to be Prophan'd by common Employments (1 *Cor.* 11. 22.) *Have ye not houſes to eat and drink in, or deſpiſe ye the Church of God?*

3. Sanctify'd Perſons ſet apart for the Miniſtry of the Goſpel are devour'd a thouſand ways: yea rather than fail

fail, we our ſelves will devour our ſelves. That unhappy Faction amongſt us about Mint and Annice had brought ſuch a Snare upon this Church, as if God's eſpecial Providence had not preſerved us, the Papiſt on the one ſide, and the prophane Atheiſt on the other had devour'd both ſides with open Mouth.

Verily 'tis a Snare to devour any thing that is Sanctified: But yet I am not come to the chief part of my Text.

As the Sacred Ordinance of God, the Word and Sacraments cannot be Miniſtred without convenient Time, Place, and Perſon ſet apart for that purpoſe: So neither can Place nor Perſon be fit for that Miniſtry without convenient Maintenance.

Wherefore God of his Goodneſs out of thoſe Temporal Bleſſings in abundance beſtowed upon the Sons of Men, hath reſum'd a Portion for this purpoſe: Which Portion is ſaid in my Text to be Sanctified, becauſe 'tis ſet, apart from common uſe to the Maintenance of God's Service. For 'tis laid down for a Principle in (*Levit.* 27. 28.) *Every thing ſeparate from common uſe is holy to the Lord:* So that where the Scripture ſpeaketh of this Portion there to be ſeparate, and to be Holy, be *Synonima*, diverſe Terms expreſſing one, and the ſelf-ſame thing.

Theſe ly open to be devour'd by Covetous and Needy Perſons; theſe be alluring Baits to entice a Man to devour them; but *Solomon* giveth us a Caveat, that under this Bait there lieth an Hook to enſnare the Conſcience of the Devourer; ſo as he may ſwallow the Bait, and wound himſelf: *Win the World, and loſe his Soul.*

Be it far from me to enſnare the Judgment of the Weak, or any ways to darken the Truth by Ceremonial or Levitical Shadows. I know where I ſpeak, in the Preſence

ſence of God, and of thoſe, who are able to diſcern, and judge what I ſay. Give me leave to enlighten my ſelf in the unfolding of this Text ſo far only as the Moral Law of God, which is perpetual, and the Evidence of his Goſpel do ſecond the ſame.

That Precept of Wiſdom to her Son in this Book (*Chap. 3. ver. 9.*) *Honour God with thy ſubſtance*; albeit ſhe had written it in the Hearts of Men by Nature: Yet ſhe had need to renew it, ſince many endeavour to blot it out; For 'tis a conceit commonly conceiv'd, that for thoſe Temporal Bleſſings we poſſeſs, if we uſe them ſoberly without exceſs, juſtly without oppreſſion of others, and charitably with ſome portion relieve the Poor, we are thereby diſcharged, as if no part thereof was due to God, or did any wiſe appertain to the firſt Table.

The *Nicodemites* were content to become Chriſtians thus far, that they would give their Hearts unto Chriſt, ſo they might diſpoſe of their Bodies as occaſion ſerv'd. Theſe go a degree farther: They will Worſhip God in Soul and Body both, That of the abundance of the heart the Mouth may ſpeak, the Knee bow, the Hands and Eyes be lifted up: But for Honouring God in their Riches, they think 'tis more than needs: They will offer to God the Oblations of their Hearts, and Calves of their Lips too; but not of their Stalls. *We will go with the Wiſe Men* (ſaith St. *Bernard*) *to ſeek Chriſt from the Eaſt: yea we will fall down and worſhip him*: but we be grown too wiſe to open our Treaſuries, that is, the renting of our Hearts, we cannot endure to be ty'd unto it. If St. *Paul* therefore will make *Agrippa* a Chriſtian, he muſt except theſe Bands too: But God will not releaſe us.

For as God is the owner and giver of all, ſo he will be acknowledged by a Sacred Rent to be Lord of all. He gave Bleſſings to *Abraham*, *Abraham* repay'd part in

Sacrum vectigal Calvin. in Heb. 1. 4.

acknowledgment of that gift. (*Gen.* 14. 20.) The Land of *Canaan* was given unto his Poſterity, but that Sacred Tribute was reſerv'd as Holy to the Lord. For want of the payment whereof, God doth often diſtrain, and re-enter upon his own; reſtraining the influence of the Heaven and the ſap of the Earth, as (*Mal.* 3. 10.) *Bring ye all the tithes into the ſtorehouſe, that there may be meat in mine houſe, and prove me now herewith, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a bleſſing*, &c. Therefore the Windows of Heaven were ſhut before, becauſe this Duty was kept back. *Si Domino Decimam non dederis, tu ad Decimam revoceris*, ſaith St. *Auguſtine*. When the Tenth is deny'd to God, he reſumeth Nine parts and leaveth us the Tenth, as in many Famines he hath done. For the quantity what portion is due; I aver not preciſely, becauſe I have not prov'd it: Only thus much ariſeth without queſtion. That as God is the giver of all our Wealth, and he only who bleſſeth the works of our Hands; ſo in acknowledgment of his Univerſal Dominion, he will have a part thereof ſet apart for his Honour and Worſhip.

Serm. de Temp. 219.

Secondly, I hope you will not determine any contemptible Portion for God: as if it was decent for us to dwell in Houſes of Cedar, and the Ark of God to be wrapped in Goats hair, (2 *Sam.* 7. 2.) or to honour God as we honour the Poor, with ſome cold Benevolence. If any be of that Religion, he's not far from *Jeroboam*'s, for he made the baſe of the People, the Clergy; theſe make the Clergy the baſeſt and meaneſt of the People. Is this to give to God that which is God's, or to Honour him with our Riches? But what tell we you of God? You profeſs to honour him with all your Hearts, But doth he eat Bull's Fleſh, or drink the Blood of Goats? Doth he dwell in Temples made with Hands, or feed of the Fruit

Fruit of the Land? Not ſo, yet he hath a Right and Intereſt in all, and hath taken into his own poſſeſſion a part to diſpoſe of at his pleaſure, (*Levit.* 27. 30.) And when he hath ſet his Mark upon it. *All this is mine.* He after diſpoſeth of it, (*Numb.* 18. 31.) *Behold I have given it to the Children* of *Levi*: For what? For their ſervice in the Tabernacle of the Congregation. To wht end? To *encourage them in the law of the Lord.* (2 *Chron.* 31. 4.) What is all this to you? The *Levites* are gone, and their Law is vaniſh'd, 'tis true: Yet this Ordinance is in force ſtill ratify'd in the Church of *Chriſt* by St. *Paul* (1 *Cor.* 9. 14.) οὕτω καὶ ὁ κύριος διέταξεν, God hath ſo ordained, that they which Preach the Goſpel ſhould live of the Goſpel.

That is to ſay, as that Right, which God then had in his Portion, he conferr'd upon the Prieſts and *Levites* for their Service at the Altar. So od hath ordain'd, that, that Right which He now hath in your Wealth, that reaſonable Portion now ſet apart for his Worſhip, be it what it will be, is conferr'd upon the Clergy for their Service in the oſpel: *Sic Ordinavit Deus*, and that upon the ſame Moral Conſiderations as before.

Firſt, God is the owner, and giver of all we Poſſeſs ſtill, therefore unleſs with ſome Portion we acknowledge his ſupream Dominion, we ſhall not only tranſgreſs Nature's Law, but in time forget whoſe Tenants we are.

Secondly, This God hath a Clergy ſtill, who be ἀφωρισμένοι ſet apart for a more Excellent Worſhip than that of the Levites, (*Rom.* 1. 1.)

Thirdly. He keeps the ſame love and affection towards his Clergy ſtill, (*Mat.* 10. 40.) *He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and him that ſent me.*

Fourthly, There's a Service to be done in the Tabernacle of the Congregation ſtill, and a more painful Ser-

vice than that of the *Levites*: They ſerv'd by turns; we continually labour in that which ſpendeth a more precious Humour than the ſweat of our Brows.

Fifthly, We have need to *be incouraged in the Law of the Lord* ſtill, and as great need as ever the *Levites* had, (2 *Chron*, 31. 4.) Therefore that Ordinance of God doth ſtand ſtill upon the ſame grounds: That we muſt live ἐκ τῆ ἱερῆ (as the Apoſtle ſpeaketh) of thar Portion which is ſanctify'd by the Temple, or as he ſpeaks more emphatically of our Times ἐκ τῆ εὐαγγελίε of that which is hallowed, or ſanctify'd by the Goſpel itſelf.

Decimæ ſacrum vectigal, qui eas recipit in loco Dei eſt ſubrogatus. Ergo quod *Melchiſedec Abraham* obtulit Decimas, eo confeſſus eſt honoris gradu ſupra ſe excellere. *Calvin.* in Heb. 1. 4.

By this you ſee, Firſt, that the Right, Property, and Intereſt in Church-Livings, is originally in God, not in us: Which therefore is ſaid, *to be ſanctify'd*, in my Text. Therefore if any ſhall devour it by Alienation, or Sacriledge, they ſtand anſwerable to God himſelf, and not to us, in that Day when all Courts ſhall be Judg'd over again.

Secondly, You ſee, That this Right and Intereſt in Church-Livings which we have, we have by grant from God, we receive it immediately from Him; ſo is it the free Gift of God, notas He is the Author of Nature only, for ſo are all other Gifts; but as He's the Author of Grace. For to this End hath He given it, that by our Miniſtry, Grace might be wrought in the Hearts of the People. * *Deus qui dignatus eſt totum dare, decimam a nobis dignatur repetere, non ſibi, ſed nobis ſine dubio profuturam.* Firſt, God doth vouchſafe to give us all things in abundance. Secondly, He accepteth one Portion back again in acknowledgment that we hold the reſt of Him. Thirdly, That Portion He hath beſtow'd again in behoofe of our Souls.

* Tract de Beat. Cathol. Converſionis.

So then with a part of your Temporal Goods you honour God; that part He Sanctifieth, and returneth into your Boſoms for your Spiritual and Everlaſting good.

What

What injury is it then to God that his ſacred Portion by Alienation and Profanation ſhould be devour'd? What indignity is it to the Goodneſs of God, that this Right we have in things Sanctify'd, deriv'd from God for his Service, ſhould be bought and ſold? That that Right which is the Gift of God, the free and gracious Gift of God, given for the perpetual maintenance of the Goſpel, ſhould be obtain'd with Money? I doubt it doth taſte of *the gall of bitterneſs (Acts* 8. 23.) And ſometimes incurreth that Snare of Deſtruction there threatned, *Pereat pecunia tua tecum.* For even that Money doth ſeldom proſper.

Doubtleſs to ſpoil God of his Right, is to ſwallow our own Bane: Yet becauſe Lucre doth blind our Eyes, the danger of this Deſtruction is not conſpicuous. Wherefore *Solomon*, doth here call it a Snare, *Laqueus eſt devorare ſacrum.* I would gladly know ſome real and material difference betwixt *Simon Magus*'s Bargain, and ſome of ours; ſaving only, that he dealt plainly, and we deviſe ſhifts to enſnare our ſelves (*Acts* 8. 19.) *Simon offered money*, and ſaid, *Give me power, that on whomſoever I lay my Hands, he may receive the Holy Ghoſt.* We offer Money, and ſay, Give me, or get me Power, that on whom I lay my Hands, he may be Sanctify'd, and ſet apart for the Word and Sacraments. What difference betwixt theſe two Powers? Saving, that that was Extraordinary, and Temporary for that time; this is Perpetual, and Eſſential to the Church of Chriſt, and ſo conſequently of more worth.

It will be ſaid, St. *Bernard* ſpake like a Fool in objecting this to the Clergy: "There was never Money given, "nor offer'd for that Sacred Power; but for ſome Honour, "or Commodity thereunto annex'd. 'Tis true. And ſhall "we think, that *Simon Magus* did offer his Money for "the Holineſs of that Power, which he then deſir'd, or "was

Declam. ſuper Reliquimus omnia.

"was it rather for that Honour, and Commodity, which "he ſuppos'd were annexed? It was that Honour he am- "bitiouſly affected, that he might be accounted τὶς μέγας "v. 9. Aſſuring himſelf withal, that tho' he had offer'd "very largely, yet if he could beſtow ſuch viſible Gifts "of the Spirit at his pleaſure, he would make himſelf " whole again in a ſhort time.

Yet I make no doubt, but the Sin of *Simon* was Simony. And who liſt to open his Eyes and look about him, he ſhall find that Simony is not a School Term, or a Word of Art; but a Snare to intrap the Conſciences of corrupt Men.

Ask a Patron who uſeth to Merchandize his Benefices; and he will proteſt unto you, that for that Right of Church-Livings deriv'd upon the Clergy together with their Function, he knoweth not what it meaneth, neither doth he intend any indignity to God, or Holy Things, he deals only for that which is valuable and Money worth. And I do verily believe him, for here's the Snare.

Neither do I think, that *Ananias* or *Saphira* his Wife did intend any injury to the Holy Ghoſt in retaining part of what themſelves had given: Only they thought that a piece of Money was as well ſaved as not.

I verily perſwade my ſelf, that *Gehazi* meant no diſgrace to that ſacred Power of Cleanſing the Leproſie: But only perceiving the liberal diſpoſition of *Naaman*, he knew, that two Suits of Apparel, and a Talent or two of Silver might be taken with as great thanks as left. The Scripture putteth us out of doubt (*Mal.* 3. 8.) That when the *Jews* kept back their *Tithes and Offerings*, it was the fartheſt end of their Thought to ſpoil God. Wherefore when God expoſtulateth with them; *you have ſpoil'd me*, they Wonder'd and ſaid, *Wherein have we ſpoil'd Thee?* In *Tithes and Offerings*, ſaith God.

We

We know, we had beguil'd certain fat Prieſts and *Levites*, who have enough beſides: But we never dreamt of ſpoiling thee. *Well* (ſaith God) *you have ſpoil'd me. Sacriledge and Simony* are ſpiritual Sins, and ſenſual Men will not conceive them. So much of the firſt Snare.

Secondly, They who perſwade themſelves, they can very cunningly and ſmoothly wind themſelves out of the former Snare, are taken in this ſecond. For having got an hint from ſome, that Tithes are not due by Divine Right, they reſolve their Conſciences on this manner. Albeit by the Law of *Moſes*, God did bind the People of the *Jews* to the preciſe payment of Tithes, (which was alſo Zealouſly urged by the Prophets) yet in the time of the oſpel, 'tis a thing more arbitrary and indifferent. So long as they live of the Goſpel, and are partakers of the Altar, 'tis ſufficient. Well: *ive they* ſhall; a certain Pittance they ſhall have, wherewithal they muſt be content, and there's an end. For when *Moſes*, *Elias*, *and Chriſt* met upon Mount *Tabor*, the firſt two Vaniſh'd. *Moſes*'s Law was very Chargeable, whereby that Tribe of *Levi* was grown too Rich: *Elias* alſo was an hot urger of *Moſes*'s Law, but there came a Cloud, which carried away *Moſes* and *Elias*, both together, with their Ceremonials and Judicials, and *Chriſt* was left alone, who was content to be Poor enough, and ſo we mind to keep him. Admit all this were true, yet the ſecond part of my Text makes a ſufficient anſwer to theſe Replyers: *Poſt vota inquirere.*

Our Progenitor and Fore-Father being taught by Nature to Honour God with their ſubſtance, directed by God's Law, what proportion was fitteſt for that purpoſe, animated by the Examples of the Primitive Church in their voluntary Oblations, did conſecrate a certain Portion of their Temporals, by ſolemn Vow unto God, delivering up to him their Title and Right from themſelves

ſelves and their Heirs for ever. Annexing commonly ſome words of fearful Execration, that if any attempt to Alienate, or take them away that his Account ſhould be without favour in the laſt Day. If after theſe ſolemn Vowes any ſhall Enquire, that is, ſhall deviſe colours and ſhifts to Alien, or take away Things Vowed unto God; to waſh, or clip that ſacred Tribute which hath God's Mark upon it; he falleth inevitably into *Solomon*'s ſecond Snare of Deſtruction. *Laqueus eſt poſt vota inquirere.* For as *Levi* paid Tithes in the Loyns of *Abraham*; ſo did we vow Tithes and Church-Endowments, in the Loyns of our Fore-fathers. They for us, and we in them have Inveſted God in that Portion, whereby we ſtand eternally Bound never to claim Intereſt therein again.

Albeit we had liberty before to uſe Eccleſiaſtical-Livings as meer Temporals; yet after theſe Vows our Caſe is the very ſame with that of *Ananias* (*Act.* 5. 2.) who for keeping back that which himſelf had Conſecrated to the Church, and colouring the ſame with a Lye, was taken in this Snare of Deſtruction, fell down at the Apoſtles Feet, gave up the Ghoſt. The ſame Snare falling upon his Wife, for partaking with him in that Councel, that is, for enquiring after the Vows were paſt. If you enquire a farther ground of this aſſertion, let it be the Rule of common Equity; that no Man having paſſed his Conſent and Deed may change it to the prejudice of another. That which is given to the Church, is paſſed over unto God; therefore he that ſhall take it again without the conſent of God, whoſe it is, committeth direct Sacriledge againſt him, and dealeth worſe with God, than God will ſuffer any Man to deal with us: Shall not this bring a Snare upon him? *He that will be rich* (ſaith the Apoſtle 1 *Tim.* 6. 9.) not he that would be Rich with honeſt endeavours; but he that reſolveth he will be

Offerimus Deo, quod Eccleſiæ tradimus.

Rich

Rich by Hook, or Crook, tho' he ſpoil God himſelf, *ſhall fall into Temptations, and Snares, and noiſome Luſts which drown Men in perdition, and deſtruction. Nemeſis Dei aliquando juſta eſt, qui invaſionem jurium & privilegiorum Eccleſiaſticorum Bello, Fame, & multis aliis Calamitatibus ſæpenumero punit.*

Secondly, Admit after the Vows it be none of ours, by Right which is given to God; yet let us enquire if we can compaſs the conſent of the Miniſters themſelves to get, or part away ſomewhat. *Volenti non fit injuria.* Alaſs! our conſent for the Alienation of Eccleſiaſtical Things from that Religious End, to which they were given, is nothing, becauſe the Right Originally is in God, and not in us. For the Act of *Ananias* in parting his own Donation, was not done unto Men, but unto God (*Acts* 5. 4.) becauſe after the Donation, the Right was not in Men, but in God; and therefore cannot be taken away without his conſent. Let me parallel this with the like. Tell me, what's the reaſon that after the Knot of Matrimony is duely ty'd, by conſent of their Parents and Friends, ratify'd by the Miniſter, what's the reaſon (I ſay) that afterwards the conſent of both the Parties, of all their Friends, ſeconded by the Miniſter himſelf, is not able to unty the ſame Knot? Your Anſwer will be, Becauſe Marriage is not of the Nature of a Civil Contract, where God himſelf hath an hand. *Therefore whom God hath joined, let no Man ſeperate*, without God's conſent. Neither be Church-Endowments Civil, where God is a Party. Therefore that which God hath receiv'd, let no Man take away without his conſent.

Mentitur Ananias Deo quia Eccleſiæ fucum fecerat Apoſtoli homines ſunt non privati, quum Deus illis vices ſuas mandaverat. *Calvin* in Act. 5. 4.

Thirdly, If this will not ſerve their turns after the Vows, Men will enquire yet farther, Whether God did ever receive them, or no? For the Silver-ſhrines of *Diana*, were never given, becauſe never accepted by God. 'Tis true: But extend not this limitation too far, for

that is dangerous. Firſt then, let us not ſit Judges upon the Conſciences of our Fore-fathers; 'tis a Snare after their Vows to enquire.

Secondly, Admit their purpoſes were ſtain'd with imperfection; ſhall that make their Deed void? God forbid. What Act of Man is without imperfection? That devout Zeal of *Jehu* was accepted, notwithſtanding his Golden-Calves in *Bethel*. Look to the other parallel. How many Exceptions might be taken unto Marriages in theſe Days? If we ſhould enquire after the Intents and ſiniſter Affections of the Parties Marry'd, with other by-reſpects, which make them not ſo acceptable unto God, as otherwiſe without doubt they would be: Yet doth the Bond ſtand firm before God and Man: For there's more Vertue in the good of an Act to confirm, than imperfection can diſſolve: Elſe *Jacob* had miſs'd of his Bleſſing, *Gen.* 27.

Thirdly, If this will not do, Men will enquire yet farther after the Vows, If God will not in ſome Caſes, give his conſent to part with his Right? No doubt, He that is ſo ready to convert his own Portion to benefit the Church in ſaving Souls, will be as willing for our good to forego, as he ever was to receive.

But theſe Caſes be rare, wherein 'tis not dark what God doth warrant. As in that other parallel of Matrimony, there's a Caſe wherein God granteth a diſmiſſion (*Mat.* 19. 9.) So there's a neceſſity wherein *David may eat of the Shew-bread, which*, otherwiſe, *is not lawful but for the Prieſts* (Mat. 12. 4.) But to make God ſpeak, where He's ſilent, and to extort his conſent, where He's moſt unwilling: This is a Snare.

Fourthly, If every way our Conſciences be inſnar'd, the next Inquiry muſt be, How we ſhall be deliver'd? Admit we have robb'd, or beguil'd the Church, 'tis paſt, we are ſorry for it. Will not God of his mercy break the Snare,

Snare, that our Souls may eſcape in the Day of the Lord? No doubt, He that was ready to break the Snare of Death, will be ready to break this Snare alſo. But upon what Condition? The Prophet *Ezekel* makes a direct Anſwer in the 33 Chapter of his Prophecy, and 15th Verſe, *If he return from his ſin, and do that which is right*, to wit, *If he reſtore the pledge, and give again that which he hath robbed, and commit no iniquity; he ſhall ſurely live, and not die.* If he reſtore.

But may not theſe Ifs be diſpens'd withall? No ſurely. That of St. *Auguſtine* is firmly grounded upon the Book of God. *Non remittitur peccatum, niſi reſtituatur ablatum.* For as in *Moſes*'s Law (*Numb.* 4. 7.) they were bound to reſtore the damage with the Principal, beſides the Ram for the Atonement, which was the ſhadow; ſo in the truth of the Goſpel, beſides the Atonement made by Chriſt upon the Croſs, Reſtitution muſt be made by us. Chriſt has ſatisfied the Juſtice of God for us, which was not in our power to do; but we muſt ſatisfie the Church, and our own Conſciences, beſides the Atonement. We will amend and be ſorry for that which is paſt: Will not that ſatisfie? True. But can we amend ſo long as we abide in the Sin? As the taking of it from the Church doth begin, ſo the keeping of it doth continue the Fault. So long as the Spoil is in thine Houſe, the Sin remaineth when the Act is paſt (*Iſaiah* 3. 14.) And where the Sin remaineth, there's no amendment.

For the Act we are ſorry. *Be not deceived: God is not mocked.* Thou can'ſt not be ſorry for taking of that which thou keepeſt voluntarily. *Sine reſtitutione pœnitentia non agitur, ſed fingitur*, ſaith St. *Auguſtine.* Without Reſtitution, no Repentance: Without Repentance, no Salvation. Unleſs we caſt that down at the Apoſtles Feet which was got by Sacriledge, we are further from Repentance than *Judas*, who notwithſtanding paſs'd out of Epiſt. 54. ad macedonium.

this Life in a double Snare of Soul and Body. Unjuſt dealing is dangerous againſt whomſoever: But beware of Sacriledge. *'Tis a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God* (Heb. 10. 31) *Thy Money may periſh with thee*, but to ſave thy ſelf, together with thy Money 'tis impoſſible. A Rich Man cannot paſs the Needle's Eye without a ſtrain; nor a Sacrilegious Perſon without detriment. 'Tis Snare every way to devour that which is Sanctified, and after the Vows to enquire how to take that from God, which is once given. 'Tis a Snare to enquire overſtrictly after the Vows, what God did take, and what was given to Superſtitious uſe. 'Tis a Snare to enquire colours, and probabilities for God's conſent, where He's moſt ſilent. 'Tis a Snare after the Sin, to enquire how by ſome ſlight Repentance, we might have our Souls and our Money too.

'Tis ſtrange to ſee what a world of Enquiries the Subtilty of the Serpent hath ſuggeſted to entangle poor Souls. We make Queries, and put Caſes, and beat our Brains, and all to inſnare a troubled Conſcience againſt the Day of the Lord. I aſſure you, that I have Treated of a Doctrine in this Sermon, which is neither New, nor to my knowledge Controverſal. I have purpoſely contain'd my ſelf within the compaſs of common, and receiv'd Grounds, laying them open according to my poor Skill. Wherefore in the Name of God, and his Church, let me commend unto you the Exhortatiom of God himſelf, (*Malcha* the 3d. Chapter and 10th. Verſe) *Bring ye all the Tithes into the Store-houſe, that there may be meat in mine houſe, and prove me now herewith, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a Bleſſing without meaſure.* Bring all the Tithes, that were a bootleſs Exhortation: Bring ſome reaſonable protion, and it ſhall be eaſier for you in the Day of Judgment. And ſeeing God would have us to prove him, let us try him whether he will be as good as his Word.

Prove

Prove him if he *will not open the windows of Heaven and pour us out a Bleſſing without meaſure.* Prove him, if he will not proſper the Nine Parts, Ten times more than before. Prove him, if He will not ſend a Learn'd and Pious Miniſtry into this Land, ſuch as ſhall be able to ſtand in the Gap againſt an Adverſary, when Learned Pious and Othordox Divines, ſhall receive Encouragement from the Altar. Prove him, if we be honouring him in Soul, and Body, and Goods, He will not honour us with a Flouriſhing Goſpel to feed our Souls, with Health and Peace: To preſerve our Bodies with Health and Proſperity to our Lives end, ſo far as ſhall advantage our Souls and Bodies to Eternal Life.

Which God grant unto us for his Son's ſake Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous; to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, Three Perſons and one Eternal Everliving, and only wiſe God, be Glory, Praiſe and Power, and Thanksgiving, now, and for ever. Amen.

POSTSCRIPT, from that Excellent Book called The Snake in the Graſs.

OUR Prieſts (ſays *Thorpe* the Quaker) came not of the Lineage of *Levi*, but of the Lineage of *Judah* to which *Judah*, no Tithes were promis'd to be given. Thus *Thorpe*, as the Quakers have Quoted him. But now, who told *Thorpe*, or the Quakers, that our Prieſts came of the Lineage of *Judah?* Are they *Jews?* What fulſome ſtuff is this! But our Saviour was of *Judah.* What then! He was not a Prieſt after the Order of *Judah*, of which Tribe *Moſes* ſpake nothing concerning Prieſthood, (*Heb*, 7. 14.) But He was a Prieſt after the Order

Order of *Melchiſedec* (*Heb.* 5. 6.) And Tithes were paid to *Melchiſedec*, long before *Levi*, who paid Tithes to *Melchiſedec*, being yet in the Loins of his Father *Abraham* (*Heb.* 7. 10.)

Now the Evangelical Prieſthood is after the Order of *Melchiſedec*: And therefore they claim Tithes, as being due to that Order of Prieſthood: So that all their Arguments as to the Law, and Levitical Prieſthood being ſuperſeded, operate nothing againſt Prieſts of a Superior and more excellent Prieſthood. And there being as Ancient mention of Tithes as there is of Prieſthood in the World, I have no manner of doubt, but they are as Ancient as Preſthood it ſelf, that is, as *Adam*: From whom deſcended the Knowledge of Tithes, as of Sacrifices, and of Prieſthood which are all the Relatives, the one being the Maintenance, the other the Office of the Prieſthood; and therefore the one, muſt be as ancient as the other: And they were all alike receiv'd by the Heathen World, by an immemorial Tradition from the Beginning, without knowing of their beginning, as they knew not their own Origination, nor of the World, of Marriage, and other poſitive Inſtitutions, which by an Univerſal Tradition had been convey'd down to them.

God reſerved the Tenth part of our Subſtance, as the Seventh of our Time, to be paid, as a Tribute and acknowledgement to him, from whom we receive all: And therefore the Payment of Tithes is a part of God's Worſhip. The Prieſts being made the Receivers (becauſe we cannot pay them to God immediately) is but a ſecondary Conſideration. They were part of the Offerings to God, under the Law (*Numbers* 18. 24.) They are called his Inheritance (*Deut.* 18. 1.) not as then Inſtituted, but then given to the *Levites*. Nor is *Melchiſedec*'s Tithing of *Abraham*, mention'd as the beginning or firſt riſe of Tithes; but 'tis told occaſionally, and as a thing

thing well known and receiv'd, even in thoſe early Days. And being part of the Worſhip of God, *Holy unto the Lord* (Levit. 27. 32, 33. they were not Alienable, or to be chang'd with any thing elſe.

The Prieſts could no more excuſe Men from the Payment of their Tithes (for they were paid to God) than they could commute any of the other Offerings, or Sacrifices, upon the pretence that they were given to the Prieſts for their maintenance.

No Man ſays, That the People did offer Sacrifices to the Prieſt; tho' the Prieſts did live of their Sacrifices; neither are Tithes offer'd to Prieſts, but to God, tho' they are paid to the Prieſts, and receiv'd by the Prieſts from the Hands of the People, as other Offerings to the Lord were.

Therefore the Subſtraction of the Tithes, as of other Offerings, is call'd a Robbing, not of the Prieſts, but of God (*Mal.* 3. 8.) 'Tis invading what God hath reſerv'd peculiar to himſelf, that we may not touch it; of all the other Trees of the Garden, we may freely Eat. And this is the ſame Sacriledge as to taſt of the forbidden Fruit. That was the firſt Sin. It was Sacriledge. And I am not afraid to ſay, that all are guilty of it, who have ſeiz'd upon the Tithes of God, and pay them not to his Prieſts: And that this Sin will not be forgiven, without a ſevere Repentance and Reſtitution.

How far extream Ignorance, occaſion'd by the Torrent of the Times, will Excuſe; I will not now diſpute: But I'me ſure wilful affected Ignorance, occaſion'd by Negligence, or Covetouſneſs will not.

And let this be added, to all that I have ſaid, That ſeveral Kings of *England*, who had then the ſole Right and Property in all the Lands of *England*, have anew Dedicated, by particular Vows, as *Jacob* (*Gen.* 28. 22.) all the whole Tithes of all the Lands of *England* to God; and ſign'd

Sign'd Charters and Grants of the ſame, and tendred them upon their Knees, at the Altar of God, in preſence, and with the approbation of the Lords, and Eſtates of the Land, with heavy Curſes aud Imprecations upon themſelves; or any of their Succeſſours, who ſhould Recal the ſame, or Incroach in any part, upon the ſaid Tithes of God; and upon all who ſhould receive ſuch Grants from them, or aſſit them in ſuch *Sacriledge*. And the ſame has been Confirm'd by ſeveral Acts of Parliament.

Now if a Man cannot violate his own Vow, how can he annul that of another? Eſpecially where his Vow was only for the Payment of what God had before Reſerv'd to himſelf. I will not launch out any farther upon this Subject; only tell the Quakers; That it was the Fryers and School-men who firſt ſet up the Notion of Tithes being *Elemoſynary*, againſt their own Canoniſts, only on purpoſe to leave the People at Liberty, to beſtow their Tithes upon the Regulars, and to maintain the Sacrilegious Impropriations, which the Pope had made of the Tithes of the ſecular Clergy, to endow their Monaſteries: Which King *Henry* the 8th. inſtead of Reſtoring, did yet the more Sacrilegiouſly Impropriate to the Laity.

FINIS.